

# THE COMBINATION OF POSSIBILITIES

## *How's THAT a Land Use Issue?*

By LaVon Griffieon

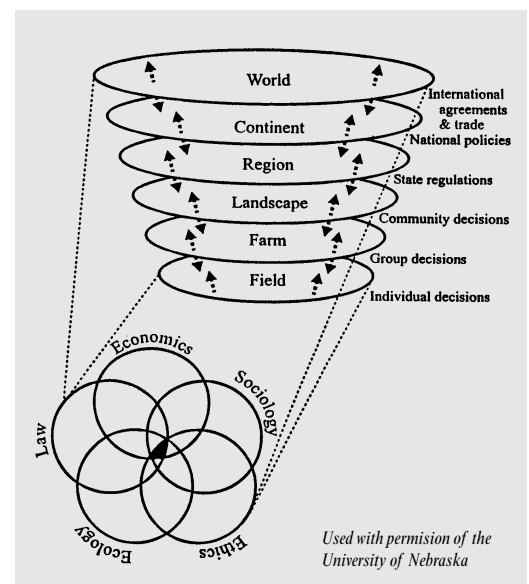
My daughter once stood in front of the Ankeny City Council and stated, “I’m the sixth generation of my family to live north of Ankeny. I often wonder what my life would have been like if Great-Great-Great-Grandpa would have just driven his wagon another hour north or east.” She was mostly referring to the City’s unrestrained growth onto prime farmland. But she was also vaguely referring to the amount of time her mother has spent away from home addressing land-use battles across Iowa.

have a focus at 1000 Friends of Iowa. But rest assured, we do have a focus. We make it our business to know what factors are influencing land use issues and decisions.

I discovered the big five factors that influence how a piece of land is used are economics, sociology, ethics, ecology and law. Often when the economics add incentive, the people and environment are infringed upon. Sometimes, the law can’t compensate for individual land owners’ ethics. Or in another scenario, ethics influence laws that provide economic incentives so people and the environment do win the day. The combination of those five factors can result in an infinite number of possibilities.

When those possibilities are applied at different scales from field to farm to the landscape of a rural or urban community, then a region, an entire continent and then to the world—any number of scenarios can result. I found this great chart from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln that visually helps me process all the outlying factors in a land use decision. In turn the land use decisions made at each level affect these factors. All those scenarios are often what lead to

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*Used with permission of the University of Nebraska*

*So when  
1000 Friends  
is accused  
of being  
all over the map,  
I smile proudly.*

Those battles have forced me to learn about many issues I wouldn’t have been aware of, had I not been involved on the front line. I must admit in the past decade I’ve learned about NASCAR, grocery stores, airport expansions, rain gardens, easements, man-made lakes, Environmental Impact Statements, CAFOs, casinos, TIF, regional retail centers, comprehensive plans, property rights, and radio towers... to name just a few. So many issues in fact, that many folks worry we don’t

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# 1000 Friends of Iowa

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*The mission of 1000 Friends of Iowa  
is to promote  
responsible development that:*

*conserves and protects our  
agricultural and natural resources*

*revitalizes our  
neighborhoods, towns and cities*

*improves the quality of life  
for future generations*

## **TRANSITIONS**

*by Laura Belin*



When I first heard of 1000 Friends of Iowa about nine years ago, I never envisioned a leadership role in the organization. I joined because I was drawn to the Buy Local initiative; both my grandfathers owned small businesses. I was also motivated to help preserve working farms and natural areas, since I hated to see more world-class farmland gone every time I visited central Iowa. The more I learned about 1000 Friends' work, the more excited I was to be part of this group.

So excited that it didn't take much to convince me to join the Board of Directors soon after my husband and I moved back to Iowa. I belong to lots of non-profit organizations, but I felt passionate about becoming more involved in this one. As fellow board members from around the state shared their local stories (some depressing, some inspiring), I became more motivated to help preserve and enhance what Iowa has in its cities, towns and rural areas.

Four years ago, I replaced LaVon Griffieon as Board President. "Replaced" is not the most accurate word, because everyone who has met LaVon knows that she is irreplaceable. Fortunately, I benefited from her continued advice and support — and nagging — when needed.

I am proud of 1000 Friends' work during my tenure as president, especially our work on "below the radar" issues: zoning rules, annexations, historic preservation, county comprehensive plans, and transportation funding priorities. Such matters can profoundly affect our economy and our communities, even if they are largely ignored by the mass media. I so appreciate the countless hours that 1000 Friends of Iowa members have spent at public meetings, open houses, and lobby days, helping to spread our message. Clearly we have plenty of educating still to do, but some local, state and even federal policy-makers have praised our expertise on land-use issues.

I also am grateful to the 1000 Friends staff who were so critical to our successes during the past four years: Jonna Higgins-Freese, Barbara Morrill, Stephanie Weisenbach and Crystal Leto.

Thanks are also due to Mary Ellen Miller, who will bring fresh energy and perspective to the position of Board President, beginning at our annual meeting in Iowa City on July 26. I look forward to continuing to serve on the board under her leadership. I will chair 1000 Friends' Development Committee with the goal of broadening our base of members and supporters. So many Iowans are not familiar with our work, yet recognize the value of economic development where people and businesses already are, without taking land out of agricultural production or natural areas. If you have outreach ideas for 1000 Friends of Iowa, or would be willing to host a house party for your friends and neighbors, please share your thoughts with me at (515) 276-6971 or [laurabelin@yahoo.com](mailto:laurabelin@yahoo.com).

Best wishes,  
**Laura Belin**

# Ghost Malls Are Becoming Too Common

By *Erv Klaas*

On May 22, 2009, the Wall Street Journal On-Line carried a story by Kris Hudson and Vanessa O’Connell, titled “Recession Turns Malls into Ghost Towns.” They tell the story of a large mall in Charlotte, NC that has lost a “slew of key tenants, including Dillards, and next month, a Sears.” Closer to home, the Metcalf South Mall in Overland Park, KS, built in the 1950s, is reduced to two anchor stores separated by a long stretch of mostly vacant shops patrolled by security guards. According to the article, plans to convert the Metcalf mall into an open-air shopping district fizzled.

In March of this year, I briefly visited the Imperial “ghost” Mall on the west edge of Hastings, NE. Thinking I would get a quick sandwich, I entered the enclosed mall under a large sign that said “Food Court.” The food court was closed as were most of the small shops and a Sears anchor store.

Although the recession has undoubtedly had an effect, the abandonment of large malls started well before the current recession. According to the article in the Wall Street Journal, only one enclosed mall has opened in the U.S. since 2006, in Jonesboro, Arkansas. General Growth Industries, which owns 200 malls including Jordon Creek in West Des Moines, filed for bankruptcy on April 16.

In 2004, Tennessee developer Bucky Wolford first proposed a large enclosed mall of 750,000 square feet on I-35, 2 miles east of downtown

## Relationship of Mall Square Footage/Acres

	<u>NAME OF MALL</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>MALL SQ FT</u>	<u>ACRES</u>
1	West Edmonton	Canada	5,400,000	122
2	King of Prussia	PA	2,850,000	126
3	South Coast Plaza	CA	2,800,000	128
4	Woodfield	IL	2,700,000	191
5	Mall of America	MN	2,500,000	78
6	Jordan Creek	IA	1,400,000	200
7	Merle Hay	IA	1,200,000	93
8	Wolford	IA	645,000	322 *
9	North Grand	IA	350,000	27

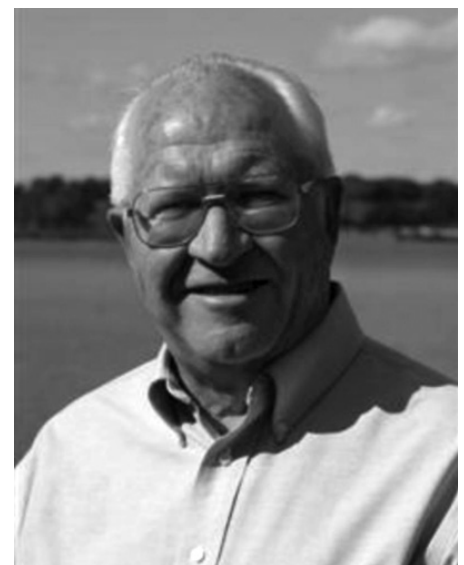
*\*Includes 30 acres of highway right-of-way*

Ames. Under pressure from Ames Smart Growth Alliance and 1000 Friends to justify the need for any mall, especially in that area of the city, Wolford downsized the plan to an open-air circular strip mall.

The city’s original land use plan had designated this site for industrial growth until a lame-duck city council changed the designation, annexed and re-zoned 320 acres to retail/commercial in November, 2005, to accommodate Wolford.

How much land does it take for a mall? Dr. Sue Ravenscroft, ISU Accounting Professor, provided the following figures for comparison.

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*Board Member, Erv Klaas lives in Ames and comments on land-use issues throughout the state and the nation.*

# Recognizing and Supporting Sustainability Transportation, Food, Farm, & Schools

## **1000 Friends of Iowa Annual Meeting**

**Saturday, July 25, 2009**

**7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.**

**Robert A. Lee Community Recreation Center  
220 S. Gilbert Street, Iowa City**

- 7:30 a.m.** Come and Enjoy the Iowa City Farmer's Market, Chauncey Swan Park  
*(market is held under cover in parking facility directly adjacent to the Recreation Center, music and activities in adjacent park.)*
- 9:00 a.m.** Registration, Coffee, Exhibits: Social Hall, Robert A. Lee Community Recreation Center
- 9:45 a.m.** Welcome by KFOI President Laura Belin
- 10:00 a.m.** "Expanding Passenger Rail: Is It a Reality in Iowa?"  
Brad Neumann, Johnson County Council of Governments
- 11:15 a.m.** Break
- 11:30 a.m.** Living Well in Place: *Recognizing & Supporting Healthy, Sustainable Local Food Systems in Iowa*  
Keynote speaker: Linda Barnes,  
EDA Program Coordinator & Associate Professor of Biology, Marshalltown Community College  
& co-owner High Hopes Gardens
- 12:15 p.m.** All Iowa Luncheon by Chef Mickey's Catering  
Buffet Style Roast Beef Menu or Vegetarian Option
- 1:00 p.m.** Annual Membership Meeting and Election of Officers  
Acknowledgement of 2008 Best Development Awards
- 1:40 p.m.** "Local Efforts at Saving Neighborhood Schools"  
Representatives from Iowa City, Ames, Des Moines and Dubuque  
will discuss efforts to preserve and protect neighborhood schools.
- 2:45 p.m.** Break
- 3:00 p.m.** Breakout Sessions *(select one)*
- a) "What's Up With TIF?" Jon Muller, Muller Consulting, Des Moines
  - b) "Clear Creek Women Landowners Watershed Project"
  - c) Downtown Iowa City Walking Tour, Karen Howard, Iowa City Planner
- 4:00 p.m.** Adjourn

# REGISTRATION

## **1000 Friends of Iowa Annual Meeting**

Please complete and return this form with your registration fee(s).

**Registration deadline is July 17th.**

**Register by July 10th to receive a free 1000 Friends of Iowa t-shirt!**

*Registration is \$25 per attendee and includes the cost of your lunch.*

Sponsorships for the annual meeting include registration.

Please contact us or visit our website if you would like more information about the benefits of sponsorship.

We will accept registrations at the door, but can't guarantee a lunch will be available for late registrants.

<b>Number of Attendees</b>	_____	<b>Amount Enclosed @ \$25 = \$</b>	_____	<b>T-shirt size(s)</b>	_____
Name	_____	Phone	_____		
Address	_____				
City	_____	State	_____	Zip	_____
Email	_____ @ _____				

*Confirmation via email helps reduce waste. Your email address will not be shared or sold.*

### **Additional Attendees**

*If you need additional room, please use the back of this form.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

**Lunch** *An Iowa grown Roast Beef buffet style lunch or Vegetarian Option are being prepared by Chef Mickey's Catering.*

I(we) prefer \_\_\_\_\_ (number of registrants) **Roast Beef** \_\_\_\_\_ (number of registrants) **Vegetarian Option**

**Confirmations** Confirmations, final agendas and directions to the event will be mailed/mailed to all registered participants. The full meeting agenda and additional information is available on our website, <http://www.1000friendsofiowa.org/content/view/34/97/>.

**Lodging** Visit [www.iowacitycoralville.org](http://www.iowacitycoralville.org) for information on lodging and local attractions in the Iowa City area.

Please mail your registration and check payable to:  
**1000 Friends of Iowa**  
**3850 Merle Hay Road, Suite 605**  
**Des Moines, IA 50310-1300**

**If you prefer, you may also register online using your credit card at [www.1000friendsofiowa.org](http://www.1000friendsofiowa.org)**



# Federal Funding Stimulated Some Good Behavior

Alternative forms of transportation have more appeal than ever these days. With gasoline prices experiencing more ups and downs than a carousel horse and greenhouse gas reduction goals looking more like a reality every day, Iowa had a pleasant surprise recently.

In a May 12 briefing, the Iowa Transportation Commission was told how \$7.2 million in federal transit capital assistance funding will be used to replace 37 vehicles, belonging to 12 transit agencies across the state.

Michelle Mc Enany, director of the Iowa DOT Office of Public Transit, explained, "Iowa has had one of the oldest transit fleets in the nation, with 60 percent of its buses operating beyond their useful life. This federal funding, combined with monies received through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, provides Iowa with a total of \$33 million in FY2009 to purchase 268 new transit vehicles. That's an all-time record level for annual spending on bus replacement under the state's bus procurement program. Most notably, the new vehicles will reduce the percentage of busses operating past their useful life to 41 percent, which is significant progress in replacing Iowa's aging transit fleet."

A full listing of projects selected is available on:

[www.iatransit.com](http://www.iatransit.com).



## Public's Input on Transit is Sought

Iowans want a transportation system that uses their tax dollars more wisely, recognizes the importance of farmland and natural areas, and reduces our impact on the environment. Setting measurable goals for more bike lanes, buses and trains in order to reduce vehicle miles traveled and asking for transportation systems that encourage infill development will serve as a means to lessen our demand on roads.

The Iowa DOT presented Iowans with an opportunity in late April to encourage sustainable transportation and land-use when six meetings were held across the state to seek public input on transportation needs. The Statewide Passenger Transportation Funding Study hopes to identify gaps between current public transit, carpool/vanpool programs, intercity bus and rail services, and what you and your neighbors believe are transportation needs. Using the information gained from the meetings and through the surveys citizens can take online, plans will be made to address Iowa's future transportation plans.

1000 Friends sent an e-mail Action Alert to our members who have provided us with e-mail addresses. However, the public transit survey is still available online if you didn't attend the public input meetings.

To submit your public transit opinions and passenger transportation needs, please visit [www.iRide21.com](http://www.iRide21.com) to take the survey.

### How Many Cars are in the USA?

In 2007 there were:

**136 million CARS**

**110 million TRUCKS**

**1 million BUSES**

**247 million** registered vehicles

<http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/policyinformation/statistics/2007/mv1.cfm>

## How's that a Land Use Issue?

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our Action Alerts and Public Policy Updates. In turn, if we see trends developing across the state we have legislative priorities or educational programs to address the issues.

So when 1000 Friends is accused of being all over the map, I smile proudly. I long for the day when we have more voices calling into the office from across Iowa, and more encouragement and support through donations of time, money and talent so 1000 Friends can develop and implement the programs we need to be even more involved with issues across the state. It is only through facing issues head on and learning about the combination of factors responsible, that we can determine a path to a solution that can benefit the common good. No one entity can do it all, but a broad base of knowledge never hinders us in our work to successfully address land use issues.

## Ghost Malls Are Becoming Too Common

*continued from page 3*

Although Wolford signed an agreement with the city to begin construction in the fall of 2007, no ground has been broken.

The Ames City Council recently heard plans for an industrial park a half-mile east of Bucky's development. One would think that the 300 acres next to the interstate highway and the Union Pacific railroad might be a more attractive location for industry to locate. If the commercial development is ever built, access to the industrial park will necessitate driving through a "busy" commercial zone.

Sprawl is characterized by low density land use, heavy reliance on the automobile, the absence of city centers and infrastructure so expensive it has to be

subsidized by an outside source. The Ames City Council has ignored its own deadlines to keep Bucky Wolford's plan alive, because he promised to be the outside source who would finance a sewer across I-35.

In a time of rising fuel costs, major recession, ghost malls, and increased awareness of the dangers of rising green house gas emissions, it makes no sense to locate a large retail center on the opposite side of the city from the city's designated growth area. But from all indications, the Ames City Council intends to wait out the recession and hope that Bucky Wolford will one day live up to his promises—even if there is but a ghost of a chance of anything besides sprawl development materializing.

# SEEKING

## Board of Directors & Advisory Council Members

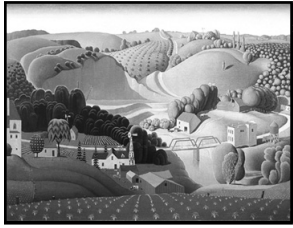
1000 Friends of Iowa is looking for talented people to serve on our Board of Directors & Advisory Council. During our 2009 Annual Meeting, the Board will elect several new members to serve a three-year term beginning with the Annual Meeting election. All applicants and nominees will be considered, and we welcome your application. If you (*or someone you know*) would like to apply go to:

<http://www.1000friendsofiowa.org/content/blogcategory/84/168/>

for additional details and to download, complete and return the Board of Directors Application Packet to:

**1000 Friends of Iowa  
3850 Merle Hay Road, Suite 605  
Des Moines, IA 50310-1300**

*1000 Friends of Iowa*



Grant Wood *Stone City, Iowa* 1930

**Citizens United for Responsible Land Use**

Non-profit  
Organization  
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**PAID**

Des Moines, IA  
Permit No. 4996

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STE 605  
DES MOINES, IA 50310-1300

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

# **SAVE THE DATE!**

Recognizing and Supporting Sustainability  
**TRANSPORTATION, FOOD, FARM, AND SCHOOLS**

## **1000 Friends of Iowa Annual Meeting**

**DATE**

Saturday, July 25, 2009

**TIME**

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**LOCATION**

Robert A. Lee Community Recreation Center  
220 S. Gilbert Street, Iowa City

Complete details inside this issue or on our website: [www.1000friendsofiowa.org](http://www.1000friendsofiowa.org)